

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers May 19, 2003

### Cameras Installed at Intersections Reduced Red Light Running but NHTSA & FHWA Questioned their Effectiveness this Week

Cameras installed at intersections have reduced the number of cars running red lights but the U.S. government questioned their effectiveness this week and recommended that communities try other safety steps first. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued guidance to cities and towns considering the technology, introduced over 10 years ago in New York. By the end of 2002, more than 72 communities had installed cameras at intersections where motorists frequently run red lights. When a car runs the light, a camera snaps a picture of the license plate and a ticket is mailed to the car's owner. Crashes caused by motorists ignoring red lights are generally more deadly and damaging than other types of crashes at intersections, according to safety data. For more information, visit the NHTSA website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

### UK Companies Ignoring Mobile Phone Usage in Fleet

UK companies are continuing to ignore mobile phone usage in fleet policies, with the latest statistics from the RAC indicating that only 20% of policies address the issue. Despite UK proposals to ban the use of mobiles while driving, companies are not addressing the issue. Phil Chapman, managing director of insurance services at RAC Business Solutions, said: 'Companies must start thinking about introducing a mobile phone policy now, rather than being caught out by the legislation in a few months.' Last month, the Lord Chief Justice issued new sentencing guidelines recommending that drivers known to have caused death due to using a mobile phone while driving should be given custodial sentences, creating even more of an onus to implement fleet policies. For more information, visit the RAC website at <http://www.rac.co.uk/>.

### A General Accounting Office Report Updates Data on Factors Contributing to Vehicle Crashes

The General Accounting Office (GAO) analyzed crash data from three USDOT databases and concluded that three factors contribute to crashes: human factors, roadway environment factors, and vehicle factors. Human factors are the most prevalent factor in crash causation followed by roadway environment factors and then vehicle factors. The report, Highway Safety, Research Continues of a Variety of Factors that Contribute to motor Vehicle Crashes (GAO-03-436) can be found online at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).

### The Bush Administration Proposes a \$247 Billion, Six-Year Highway and Transit Program

The Bush administration proposed a \$247 billion, six-year highway and transit program on May 14, 2003 that faces a rough road in the U.S. Congress where some lawmakers want to spend billions more. The plan, the largest transportation funding proposal ever, would not increase gasoline taxes or index them for inflation to increase funding for construction programs. It seeks a bigger contribution from state governments and business to pay for these projects, a theme that cuts across the administration's long-term funding proposals for rail and other transportation priorities. "The funding part is going to be probably the most controversial," US Transportation Department Secretary Norman Mineta said, noting that among other initiatives to leverage federal dollars, the bill would create a new

class of tax-exempt bonds for highways. We could always use more money but our purpose is really to take the resources that are available and try to stretch them as much as possible. What we're trying to do is bring more players to the table." The White House plan has already been countered by a proposal in the U.S. House of Representatives to spend \$375 billion over six years. Industry groups warned that the administration's proposal failed to meet its own estimate of funds needed to improve the nation's clogged highways. Under the Bush plan, "highway funding would not equal 2003 levels until 2007," the American Highway Users Alliance, which represents truckers, bus companies and motorists, said in a statement, citing the cut proposed in the 2004 budget plan. For more information, visit the USDOT website at <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot04003.htm>.

### **The Louisiana House Transportation Committee Rejects Proposed Ban on Use of Mobile Phones While Driving**

The Louisiana House Transportation Committee rejected a proposed ban on the use of mobile phones while driving after hearing from Louisiana's highway safety chief, Jim Champagne. According to Champagne, the ban would be unenforceable. Additionally, he stated, mobile phones are no more distracting than everything else that happens in vehicles. "The bottom line is you can't legislate common sense," he said. Only four out of 12 members of the House Transportation Committee supported the ban. For the full story, visit <http://wb38.trb.com/news/wgno-cellphones051303,0,4805709.story?coll=wnol-news-1>.

### **General Motors Announces Installation of Vehicle Stability Enhancement Systems (VSES) in the GMC Savana and Chevrolet Express 15-Passenger Vans**

General Motors announced it would begin installing vehicle stability enhancement systems (VSES) in GMC Savana and Chevrolet Express 15-passenger vans during the 2004-model year production cycle. The system will be standard on all 15-passenger vans. It will be incorporated as an interim change during the 2004 production year, which begins later this summer. VSESs help drivers maintain control of vehicles during certain difficult driving conditions such as ice, snow, gravel, wet pavement, and uneven road surfaces, as well as in emergency lane changes or avoidance maneuvers. VSES works by recognizing wheel skid. Sensors detect the difference between the steering wheel angle and the direction the driver is actually turning by "reading" the steering wheel position, the amount of sideways force in play, vehicle speed, and the vehicle's response to steering wheel input. The system then uses the brakes to enhance control of the vehicle's direction and to help keep it on course. It automatically reduces the engine torque and applies precise amounts of pressure to front right or left brakes to help keep the vehicle on track. These brake and engine interventions help realign the vehicle's actual path with that being steered by the driver.

### **The U.S. Department of Transportation's FHWA Announces a New Web-based "Community of Practice" Called "National Highway Visibility" (NHV)**

FHWA announced a new web-based "community of practice" called "National Highway Visibility" (NHV). The purpose of this web site is to provide a forum for discussions on weather-related (and more specifically fog-related) highway visibility issues and opportunities, and a central web site for related documents. Participants who register may set personal preferences, receive daily updates, and post website links and topics of discussion. Anyone who has an interest in weather-related highway visibility issues may participate, including FHWA staff, state highway administrations, local government agencies, academic and research institutions, vendors, manufacturers, and consultants. The new "National Highway Visibility" Web site is an FHWA externally hosted site that can be accessed at <http://www.fhwa1.ornl.gov/cops/hcx.nsf/home> then selecting the National Highway Visibility topic.

### **Fleet Drivers Suffering from Hay Fever are Only a Sneeze Away from an Accident, AA Business Services of the UK Warns**

• Fleet drivers suffering from hay fever are only a sneeze away from an accident, AA Business Services of the UK is warning. They have issued a series of tips as part of a 'safe-sneeze guide' to ensure accidents are kept to a minimum. AA Business Services director David Wallace said: "Drivers doing 70mph lose their vision for as much as 100 metres with every sneeze. So someone having a sneezing 'fit' of eight sneezes in a row could be traveling 'blind' for up to half a mile." However, he said modern technology was improving conditions for drivers: "Non-drowsy medicines are now available, and more cars have pollen filters and air conditioning, allowing motorists to stay cool by driving with the windows up."

#### **AA Hayfever Tips**

- Only take medication which does not cause drowsiness
- Keep a box of tissues near the dashboard for easy access
- Slow down if you are about to sneeze and drop back further from the car in front
- Check whether your car has a pollen filter fitted. Most new models have it fitted as standard. Make sure it is renewed at least once a year
- If your car has air conditioning, use it instead of opening windows and air vents – it will reduce pollen grains in the car
- Block out bright sunlight by wearing sunglasses
- Vacuum car mats and carpets regularly during summer

### **New Jersey's State Assembly Transportation Committee Approves a Bill Making Careless or Distracted Driving Illegal**

New Jersey's State Assembly Transportation Committee approved a bill that would make careless or distracted driving illegal. The bill would also require the use of a hands-free device when driving and talking on a wireless phone. In addition, the bill lists behaviors such as eating, reading, using fax machines, engaging in personal grooming or tending to unsecured pets as other actions which can result in citations.

### **Congestion Pricing Can Potentially Reduce Congestion by Providing Incentives for Drivers**

According to General Accounting Office testimony before the U.S. Congress' Joint Economic Committee, congestion pricing potentially can reduce congestion by providing incentives for drivers to shift trips to off-peak periods, to use less congested routes, or to use alternative modes, thereby spreading out demand for available transportation infrastructure. For further information, visit <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d03735t.pdf>.